

ATTACHMENT J-2

RESPONSE LETTERS ON NOTICE OF PREPARATION (NOP), RESPONSE LETTERS ON SUPPLEMENTAL NOP, RESPONSE LETTERS ON NOTICE OF INTENT (NOI)

RESPONSES TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NOP

This attachment contains the following responses to the 2007 Supplemental Notice of Preparation:

Responses from State Agencies

- California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Santa Ana Region (August 15, 2007, 1 page)
- California Department of Transportation, District 8 (August 20, 2007, 1 page)
- Native American Heritage Commission (August 9, 2007, 4 pages)
- State Clearinghouse and Planning Unit (August 3, 2007, 3 pages)
- University of California, Riverside (August 10, 2007, 8 pages)
- University of California, Riverside (August 31, 2007, 1 page)

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Linda S Adams
Secretary for
Environmental Protection

California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Santa Ana Region

3737 Main Street Suite 500 Riverside, California 92501-3348
Phone (951) 782-4130 • FAX (951) 781-6288 • TDD (951) 782-3221
www.waterboards.ca.gov/santana

81391 CB, GQ, MM,
HS, SK



Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor

August 15 2007

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RIVERSIDE COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Ms Cathy Bechtel
Riverside County Transportation Commission
4080 Lemon Street 3rd Floor
P O Box 12008
Riverside CA 92502-2208

Re COMMENTS ON SUPPLEMENTAL NOTICE OF PREPARATION FOR THE
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
STATEMENT (EIR/EIS) FOR THE MID COUNTY PARKWAY PROJECT
SCH#2004111103

Dear Ms Bechtel

Consistent with requirements associated with the Caltrans Statewide Storm Water Permit (Order No 99-06-DWQ NPDES No CAS000003) on whichever alternative becomes the chosen alignment this Regional Board will expect to see implementation of post-construction permanent treatment Best Management Practices applied to discharges of storm water and authorized non-storm water runoff on 100% of the project. Incorporation of these BMPs will need to be addressed early in the design stages to be sure that adequate right of way is allocated to accommodate space requirements.

If you have any questions regarding these comments please contact Bob Whitaker at (951) 782-4993 or bwhitaker@waterboards.ca.gov

Sincerely

Bob Whitaker
Sanitary Engineering Associate
Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board

California Environmental Protection Agency



B.1.9.2.1

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DISTRICT 8

DISTRICT DIRECTOR, MS 1201

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING, MS 1222

464 WEST 4TH STREET, 6TH FLOOR

SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92401-1400

PHONE (909) 383-4055

FAX (909) 383-6239

TTY (909) 383-6300

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RIVERSIDE COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

August 20, 2007

Ms. Cathy Bechtel
Riverside County Transportation Commission
4080 Lemon Street, 3rd Floor
Riverside, CA 92502-2208

Subject: Supplemental Notice of Preparation for the Draft Environmental Impact
Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the Mid-County Parkway Project,
SCH#2004111103

Dear Ms. Bechtel:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration and Riverside County Transportation Commission, has been involved in development of the range of alternatives. This letter is to acknowledge that Caltrans is in agreement with the refinements made to the suite of alternatives for the subject project.

If you have any questions about this review, please contact Marie Petry, Environmental Studies Support B, at (909) 383-6239.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Michael A. Perovich'.

MICHAEL A. PEROVICH

District Director

c: Eric Haley, Executive Director, Riverside County Transportation Commission

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NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE COMMISSION

915 CAPITOL MALL, ROOM 364
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
(916) 653-6251
Fax (916) 657-5390
www.nahc.ca.gov
ds_nahc@pacbell.net



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RIVERSIDE COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

August 9, 2007

Mr. Eric Haley, Executive Director

RIVERSIDE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

4080 Lemon Street, 3rd Floor
Riverside, CA 92501

Re: SCH# 2004111103; CEQA Notice of Preparation (NOP) draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for Mid County Parkway Project, Riverside County, California.

Dear Mr. Haley:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above-referenced document. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that any project that causes a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource, that includes archeological resources, is a 'significant effect' requiring the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR per CEQA guidelines § 15064.5(b)(c). In order to comply with this provision, the lead agency is required to assess whether the project will have an adverse impact on these resources within the 'area of potential effect (APE),' and if so, to mitigate that effect. To adequately assess the project-related impacts on historical resources, the Commission recommends the following action:

- ✓ Contact the appropriate California Historic Resources Information Center (CHRIS). Contact information for the 'Information Center' nearest you is available from the State Office of Historic Preservation in Sacramento (916/653-7278). The record search will determine:
 - If a part or the entire (APE) has been previously surveyed for cultural resources.
 - If any known cultural resources have already been recorded in or adjacent to the APE.
 - If the probability is low, moderate, or high that cultural resources are located in the APE.
 - If a survey is required to determine whether previously unrecorded cultural resources are present.
- ✓ If an archaeological inventory survey is required, the final stage is the preparation of a professional report detailing the findings and recommendations of the records search and field survey.
 - The final report containing site forms, site significance, and mitigation measures should be submitted immediately to the planning department. All information regarding site locations, Native American human remains, and associated funerary objects should be in a separate confidential addendum, and not be made available for public disclosure.
 - The final written report should be submitted within 3 months after work has been completed to the appropriate regional archaeological Information Center.
- ✓ Contact the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) for:
 - * A Sacred Lands File (SLF) search of the project area and information on tribal contacts in the project vicinity who may have information on cultural resources in or near the APE. Please provide us site identification as follows: USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle citation with name, township, range and section. This will assist us with the SLF.
 - Also, we recommend that you contact the Native American contacts on the attached list to get their input on the effect of potential project (e.g. APE) impact.
- ✓ Lack of surface evidence of archeological resources does not preclude their subsurface existence.
 - Lead agencies should include in their mitigation plan provisions for the identification and evaluation of accidentally discovered archeological resources, per California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) §15064.5 (f). In areas of identified archaeological sensitivity, a certified archaeologist and a culturally affiliated Native American, with knowledge in cultural resources, should monitor all ground-disturbing activities.
 - Lead agencies should include in their mitigation plan provisions for the disposition of recovered artifacts, in consultation with culturally affiliated Native Americans.

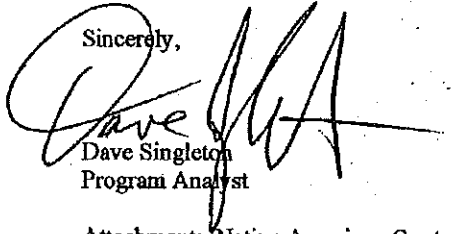
√ Lead agencies should include provisions for discovery of Native American human remains or unmarked cemeteries in their mitigations plans.

- CEQA Guidelines §15064.5(d) requires the lead agency to work with the Native Americans identified by this Commission if the Initial Study identifies the presence or likely presence of Native American human remains within the APE. CEQA Guidelines provide for agreements with Native American groups, identified by the NAHE, to ensure the appropriate and dignified treatment of Native American human remains and any associated grave goods.
- Health and Safety Code §7050.5, Public Resources Code §5097.98 and CEQA Guidelines §15064.5(d) mandate procedures to be followed in the event of an accidental discovery of any human remains in a location other than a dedicated cemetery.

√ Lead agencies should consider avoidance, as defined in CEQA Guidelines §15370 when significant cultural resources are discovered during the course of project planning or execution.

Please feel free to contact me at (916) 653-6251 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave Singleton", is written over the typed name and title.

Dave Singleton
Program Analyst

Attachment: Native American Contact List

Native American Contacts
Riverside County
August 9, 2007

Cahuilla Band of Indians
Anthony Madrigal, Jr., Interim-Chairperson
P.O. Box 391760 Cahuilla
Anza , CA 92539
tribalcouncil@cahuilla.net
(951) 763-2631

(951) 763-2632 Fax

Soboba Band of Mission Indians
Robert J. Salgado, Chairperson
P.O. Box 487 Luiseno
San Jacinto , CA 92581
varres@soboba-nsn.gov
(951) 654-2765
(951) 654-4198 - Fax

Pechanga Band of Mission Indians
Paul Macarro, Cultural Resource Center
P.O. Box 1477 Luiseno
Temecula , CA 92593
(951) 308-9295 Ext 8106
(951) 676-2768
(951) 506-9491 Fax

Ti'At Society
Cindi Alvitre
6602 Zelzah Avenue Gabrielino
Reseda , CA 91335
calvitre@yahoo.com
(714) 504-2468 Cell

Ramona Band of Mission Indians
Joseph Hamilton, vice chairman
P.O. Box 391670 Cahuilla
Anza , CA 92539
admin@ramonatribe.com
(951) 763-4105
(951) 763-4325 Fax

Gabrielino/Tongva Tribal Council
Anthony Morales, Chairperson
PO Box 693 Gabrielino Tongva
San Gabriel , CA 91778
ChiefRBwife@aol.com
(626) 286-1632
(626) 286-1758 - Home
(626) 286-1262 Fax

San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
Henry Duro, Chairperson
26569 Community Center Drive Serrano
Highland , CA 92346
(909) 864-8933
(909) 864-3370 Fax

Santa Rosa Band of Mission Indians
John Marcus, Chairman
P.O. Box 609 Cahuilla
Hemet , CA 92546
srtribaloffice@aol.com
(951) 658-5311
(951) 658-6733 Fax

This list is current only as of the date of this document.

Distribution of this list does not relieve any person of statutory responsibility as defined in Section 7050.5 of the Health and Safety Code, Section 5097.94 of the Public Resources Code and Section 5097.98 of the Public Resources Code.

This list is only applicable for contacting local Native American with regard to cultural resources for the proposed SCH#2004111103; CEQA Notice of Preparation (NOP) draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for Mid County Parkway Project; Riverside County Transportation Commission; California.

Native American Contacts

Riverside County

August 9, 2007

Gabrielino/Tongva Council / Gabrielino Tongva Nation
Sam Dunlap, Tribal Secretary
761 Terminal Street; Bldg 1, 2nd floor Gabrielino Tongva
Los Angeles, CA 90021
office @tongvatribes.net
(213) 489-5001 - Officer
(909) 262-9351 - cell
(213) 489-5002 Fax

Pechanga Band of Mission Indians
Mark Macarro, Chairperson
P.O. Box 1477 Luiseno
Temecula, CA 92593
tbrown@pechanga-nsn.gov
(951) 676-2768
(951) 695-1778 Fax

Morongo Band of Mission Indians
Britt W. Wilson, Cultural Resources-Project Manager
49750 Seminole Drive Cahuilla
Cabazon, CA 92230 Serrano
britt_wilson@morongo.org
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(951) 755-5200/323-0822-cell
(951) 922-8146 Fax

Serrano Band of Indians
Goldie Walker
6588 Valeria Drive Serrano
Highland, CA 92346
(909) 862-9883

San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
Ann Brierty, Environmental Department
101 Pure Water Lane Serrano
Highland, CA 92346
abrierty@sanmanuel-nsn.gov
(909) 863-5899 EXT-4321

Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians
Harold Arres, Cultural Resources Manager
P.O. Box 487 Luiseno
San Jacinto, CA 92581
harres@soboba-nsn.gov
(951) 654-2765
FAX: (951) 654-4198

(909) 862-5152 Fax

Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians
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(951) 654-4198 - FAX

This list is current only as of the date of this document.

Distribution of this list does not relieve any person of statutory responsibility as defined in Section 7050.5 of the Health and Safety Code, Section 5097.94 of the Public Resources Code and Section 5097.98 of the Public Resources Code.

This list is only applicable for contacting local Native American with regard to cultural resources for the proposed SCH#2004111103; CEQA Notice of Preparation (NOP) draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for Mid County Parkway Project; Riverside County Transportation Commission; California.



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE of PLANNING AND RESEARCH

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE AND PLANNING UNIT

81341 CB, GQ,
MM, HS



CYNTHIA BRYANT
DIRECTOR

Notice of Preparation

August 3 2007

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RIVERSIDE COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

To Reviewing Agencies

Re Mid County Parkway Project
SCH# 2004111103

Attached for your review and comment is the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Mid County Parkway Project draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

Responsible agencies must transmit their comments on the scope and content of the NOP focusing on specific information related to their own statutory responsibility within 30 days of receipt of the NOP from the Lead Agency. This is a courtesy notice provided by the State Clearinghouse with a reminder for you to comment in a timely manner. We encourage other agencies to also respond to this notice and express their concerns early in the environmental review process.

Please direct your comments to

Cathy Bechtel
Riverside County Transportation Commission
4080 Lemon Street, 3rd Floor
P.O. Box 12008
Riverside, CA 92502-2208

with a copy to the State Clearinghouse in the Office of Planning and Research. Please refer to the SCH number noted above in all correspondence concerning this project.

If you have any questions about the environmental document review process, please call the State Clearinghouse at (916) 445-0613.

Sincerely,

Scott Morgan
Project Analyst, State Clearinghouse

Attachments
cc: Lead Agency

**Document Details Report
State Clearinghouse Data Base**

SCH# 2004111103
Project Title Mid County Parkway Project
Lead Agency Riverside County Transportation Commission

Type NOP Notice of Preparation
Description The project includes two no project/no action alternatives and five "Build" alternatives. Many of the alternatives share common segments.

Lead Agency Contact

Name Cathy Bechtel
Agency Riverside County Transportation Commission
Phone (951) 787-7141 **Fax** (951) 787-7141
email
Address 4080 Lemon Street 3rd Floor
P O Box 12008
City Riverside **State** CA **Zip** 92502-2208

Project Location

County Riverside
City Perris Corona San Jacinto
Region
Cross Streets
Parcel No
Township

Range

Section

Base

Proximity to:

Highways I-15 I-215 SR 79
Airports
Railways
Waterways Lake Matthews Lake Perris
Schools
Land Use

Project Issues Air Quality Biological Resources Archaeologic-Historic Flood Plain/Flooding Toxic/Hazardous
Noise Recreation/Parks Aesthetic/Visual Water Supply Soil Erosion/Compaction/Grading
Geologic/Seismic Traffic/Circulation

Reviewing Agencies Resources Agency Regional Water Quality Control Board Region 8 Department of Parks and
Recreation Native American Heritage Commission Public Utilities Commission Office of Historic
Preservation Department of Fish and Game Region 6 Department of Water Resources California
Highway Patrol Caltrans District 8 Air Resources Board Transportation Projects

Date Received 08/03/2007 **Start of Review** 08/03/2007 **End of Review** 09/04/2007

Note: Blanks in data fields result from insufficient information provided by lead agency

Resources Agency

☒ Resources Agency
Nadell Gayou

☐ Dept of Boating & Waterways
David Johnson

☐ California Coastal Commission
Elizabeth A. Fuchs

☐ Colorado River Board
Gerald R. Zimmerman

☐ Dept of Conservation
Sharon Howell

☐ California Energy Commission
Paul Richins

☐ Dept of Forestry & Fire Protection
Allen Robertson

☒ Office of Historic Preservation
Wayne Donaldson

☐ Dept of Parks & Recreation
Environmental Stewardship Section

☐ Reclamation Board
DeeDee Jones

☐ S F Bay Conservation & Dev't Comm
Steve McAdam

☒ Dept of Water Resources
Resources Agency
Nadell Gayou

☐ Conservancy

☐ Fish and Game

☐ Depart of Fish & Game
Scott Flint

☐ Environmental Services Division

☐ Fish & Game Region 1
Donald Koch

☐ Fish & Game Region 1E
Laune Harnsberger

☐ Fish & Game Region 2
Banky Curtis

☐ Fish & Game Region 3
Robert Floerke

☐ Fish & Game Region 4
Julie Vance

☐ Fish & Game Region 5
Don Chadwick

☐ Habitat Conservation Program

☒ Fish & Game Region 6
Gabrina Gatchel

☐ Habitat Conservation Program

☐ Fish & Game Region 6 I/M
Gabrina Gatchel

☐ Inyo/Mono, Habitat Conservation Program

☐ Dept of Fish & Game M
George Isaac

☐ Food & Agriculture
Steve Shaffer

☐ Dept of Food and Agriculture
Dept of General Services

☐ Public School Construction

☐ Dept of General Services
Robert Sleppy

☐ Environmental Services Section

☐ Dept of Health Services
Veronica Malloy

☐ Dept of Health/Drinking Water

☐ Independent

☐ Commissions, Boards

☐ Delta Protection Commission
Debbie Eddy

☐ Office of Emergency Services
Dennis Casinillo

☐ Governor's Office of Planning & Research
State Clearinghouse

☒ Native American Heritage Comm
Debbie Treadway

☒ Public Utilities Commission
Ken Lewis

☐ Santa Monica Bay Restoration
Guangyu Wang

☐ State Lands Commission
Jean Sanno

☐ Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA)
Cherry Jacques

☐ Business, Trans & Housing

☐ Caltrans - Division of Aeronautics
Sandy Hesnard

☐ Caltrans - Planning
Tem Pencovic

☒ California Highway Patrol
Shirley Kelly

☐ Office of Special Projects

☐ Housing & Community Development
Lisa Nichols

☐ Housing Policy Division

☐ Dept of Transportation

☐ Caltrans, District 1
Rex Jackman

☐ Caltrans, District 2
Marcelino Gonzalez

☐ Caltrans, District 3
Jeff Pulverman

☐ Caltrans, District 4
Tim Sable

☐ Caltrans, District 5
David Murray

☐ Caltrans, District 6
Marc Bimbaum

☐ Caltrans, District 7
Cheryl J. Powell

☒ Caltrans, District 8
Dan Kopulsky

☐ Caltrans, District 9
Gayle Rosander

☐ Caltrans, District 10
Tom Dumas

☐ Caltrans, District 11
Mano Orso

☐ Caltrans, District 12
Bob Joseph

☐ Cal EPA

☐ Air Resources Board

☐ Airport Projects
Jim Lerner

☒ Transportation Projects
Ravi Ramalingam

☐ Industrial Projects
Mike Tollstrup

☐ California Integrated Waste Management Board
Sue O'Leary

☐ State Water Resources Control Board
Regional Programs Unit
Division of Financial Assistance

☐ State Water Resources Control Board
Student Intern, 401 Water Quality Certification Unit
Division of Water Quality

☐ State Water Resources Control Board
Steven Herrera
Division of Water Rights

☐ Dept of Toxic Substances Control
CEQA Tracking Center

☐ Department of Pesticide Regulation

☐ Other

☐ Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)

☐ RWQCB 1
Cathleen Hudson
North Coast Region (1)

☐ RWQCB 2
Environmental Document Coordinator
San Francisco Bay Region (2)

☐ RWQCB 3
Central Coast Region (3)

☐ RWQCB 4
Teresa Rodgers
Los Angeles Region (4)

☐ RWQCB 5S
Central Valley Region (5)

☐ RWQCB 5F
Central Valley Region (5)
Fresno Branch Office

☐ RWQCB 5R
Central Valley Region (5)
Redding Branch Office

☐ RWQCB 6
Lahontan Region (6)

☐ RWQCB 6V
Lahontan Region (6)
Victorville Branch Office

☐ RWQCB 7
Colorado River Basin Region (7)

☒ RWQCB 8
Santa Ana Region (8)

☐ RWQCB 9
San Diego Region (9)

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SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

August 10, 2007

MOTTE RIMROCK RESERVE
EMERSON OAKS RESERVE
DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY
RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA 92521
VOICE: (951) 657-3111
FAX: (951) 657-5443

RECEIVED
AUG 13 2007
RIVERSIDE COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Cathy Bechtel
Mid County Parkway Project Manager
Riverside County Transportation Commission
4080 Lemon Street, 3rd Floor
Riverside, CA 92502-2208

Re: Objections to Proposed Significant and Irreversible Impacts to the Motte Rimrock Reserve,
SKR Habitat and area within MSHCP

Dear Ms. Bechtel:

It has come to the attention of the University of California Natural Reserve System (NRS) that the grading limits for alignment Alternative 9 (Far South/Placentia Avenue) of the proposed Mid County Parkway (MCP) pass within several meters of the northwest boundary of the Motte Rimrock Reserve. We understand that the final decision on the location of the freeway's right-of-way has not been finalized, but we have been informed that Alternative 9 is receiving very serious consideration from Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) officials. We are concerned that if Alternative 9 is chosen the close proximity of the MCP will threaten the Reserve's mission within the NRS, its role as a core reserve for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Habitat Conservation Plan (SKRHCP), and its role as a conservation area within the Western Riverside Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP).

The mission of the Natural Reserve System is to contribute to the understanding and wise management of the Earth and its natural systems by supporting university-level teaching, research, and public service at protected natural areas throughout California. The NRS is also a "Trustee Agency," a state agency defined by law as having jurisdiction over natural resources held in trust for the people of the State of California that may be affected by a project (California Public Resources Code, Section 15386). The NRS is one of only four Trustee Agencies in the state, along with the California Department of Fish and Game, the State Lands Commission, and the State Department of Parks and Recreation. None of these Trustee agencies represent the interests of the others, each represents the resources for which it is responsible. We are puzzled that, given the important role played by Trustee agencies, we were never provided notice of Alternative 9. The MCP proposal, and Alternative 9, came to our attention quite by accident.

The NRS implements its mission by preserving lands that harbor native habitats representative of the biological diversity found in California, and to provide teaching and

research opportunities on these lands. In this capacity the Motte Rimrock Reserve preserves Riversidean coastal sage scrub, a vegetation association unique to southern California and one that is disappearing across the region. In support of research, the Reserve has attracted faculty and students from educational institutions across the United States and Canada. Since 1987 over 300 researchers (faculty, postdoctoral students, graduate students, undergraduates, and field assistants) from 27 institutions representing 10 states and 2 provinces have conducted research at the Reserve. The number of user days accumulated by researchers from 1987-2006 totals 6078. Research activities have been reported in 70 scholarly publications and other documents since 1987, and 5 projects are currently on-going at the Motte. Lands preserved and managed by the Reserve also serve as a natural laboratory for educational ends, with 16 classes serving 2106 students in the last 20 years. In addition to current projects, the Motte has a high-profile future, having been identified as a possible participant in the National Ecological Observation Network (NEON) a two hundred million dollar project sponsored by the National Science Foundation that will monitor environmental parameters at selected sites across the continental United States.

As a participant in the SKRHCP, the Motte Rimrock Reserve is one of seven core reserves that harbor populations of the Stephens' kangaroo rat (SKR), a federally endangered species. In fact, much of what is known about the biology of the SKR resulted from research carried out on the Reserve by Dr. Mary Price and colleagues during the late 1980s and early 1990s. An endowment set up through the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency (RCHCA) provides funds to preserve and manage Stephens' kangaroo rat habitat. In the late 1990's the RCHCA transferred approximately 60 acres of SKR occupied land to the Reserve including APN 317-190-011 the parcel in closest proximity to the MCP Alternative 9 alignment.

Within the context of the MSHCP the Reserve encompasses a portion of the Motte-Rimrock Conservation Subunit (Subunit 1), a part of the Mead Valley Plan Area (Figure 1). The Motte-Rimrock Subunit extends from the northern city limits of Perris in the south to Cajalco Road in the north and from the vicinity of Harvill Ave in the east to the area near the Old Elsinore Road in the west (Figure 1). Twenty-one of the one hundred and forty-six MSHCP covered species have been documented to occupy the Reserve and surrounding habitat included within the seven criteria cells that comprise the Motte-Rimrock Subunit.

We are gravely concerned that a freeway the size of the MCP located in such close proximity to the Motte Rimrock Reserve as implemented through Alternative 9 will impose significant impacts to the biological resources located within its boundaries. These impacts have the potential to reduce or jeopardize the continued function of the Reserve as teaching and research facility. While these impacts may not be considered direct impacts (i.e., habitat destruction) under CEQA they do pose threats that are every bit as damaging. We have four main areas of concern:

I. Decreased Connectivity to Other Habitat Stands

Our primary concern with the placement of Alternative 9 is the resulting habitat fragmentation and loss of connectivity between the Motte Rimrock Reserve and other habitat stands located nearby. The Reserve occupies the southern half of a large stand of Riversidean coastal sage scrub and grassland approximately 1200 acres in extent. Currently this tract is

almost completely surrounded by development. The Western Riverside MSHCP designates this as the Motte-Rimrock Subunit (Subunit 1) and it is a candidate for conservation under the Plan (Dudek & Associates 2003) (Figure 1). The MCP would cut this area of sage scrub habitat in half and severely reduce movement of organisms between the two fragments.

The effects of habitat fragmentation on populations of plants and animals are well documented. First, reducing the size of populations through fragmentation increases the risk of inbreeding, a process that reduces the genetic diversity in populations and hinders their ability to adapt to changing environmental conditions (Ralls et al. 1986, Ellstrand and Elam 1992, Dixon et al. 2007). Second, limiting connectivity with other habitat stands further complicates inbreeding problems by severely restricting or completely blocking genetic exchange among populations. Unobstructed genetic exchange among populations is instrumental to offsetting the negative effects of inbreeding. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, small populations created by habitat fragmentation run an increased risk of local extinction through stochastic environmental events (Soule et al. 1992, Fahrig 2002). Even more important, the risk is non-linear: a small population half the size of another is *more* than twice as likely to become extinct through stochastic events. Such events are not imaginary; we are currently experiencing the most severe drought recorded in southern California, one that is occurring only a few years after the previous most severe drought recorded. The lack of food resources resulting from extremely low rainfall limits reproduction and increases mortality in a variety of species; indeed, during the previous severe drought most birds in coastal sage scrub forewent breeding. If reproduction remains limited and mortality remains high even for a few years of drought, then it is increasingly likely that populations of some species will go extinct within small habitat fragments. A large population size offers some prospect that at least a few individuals will survive through harsh times.

Fragmentation of the Motte-Rimrock Subunit has negative implications for all species on the Reserve. The species experiencing the greatest threat are those already at risk across the region: the federally endangered SKR and the federally threatened coastal California gnatcatcher (CAGN). The SKR is endemic to southern California and found exclusively in western Riverside County and extreme northern San Diego County. The remaining suitable habitat existing outside of the SKRHCP core reserves is dwindling as development within the region continues. In the future, SKR populations will be restricted to habitat located within and in close proximity to the core reserves. The same may be true for the CAGN. The uninterrupted exchange of individuals between regions of occupied habitat within the vicinity of the Motte Rimrock Reserve is important to the continued persistence for both the SKR and CAGN from population genetics as well as demographic perspectives. In addition to the SKR and the CAGN, the Reserve harbors nineteen other species covered by the MSHCP, many of which are state and/or federal species of concern. Several representative species covered by the MSHCP that may be commonly seen on the Reserve include: orange-throated whiptail lizard, San Diego coast horned lizard, red-diamond rattlesnake, Bell's sage sparrow, rufous-crowned sparrow, loggerhead shrike, bobcat, and coyote.

II. Edge Effects

While the MCP does not directly impact the habitat on the Reserve by overtly removing it, its influence can extend for tens to hundreds of meters away from the boundary and well into the Reserve proper; this is known as the "edge effect." Edge effects result when natural habitat along a human-induced interface becomes degraded over time. Degradation results for a number of reasons: light and noise pollution, invasive plants and animals, artificial water regimes, and refuse/trash dumping. Thus, the presence of an edge and its associated effects reduces a reserve's functional area well below its full extent (Kelly and Rotenberry 1993).

Moderate edge effects are already a management issue at the Motte Rimrock Reserve. Our staff spends an inordinate amount of time cleaning up material dumped within our boundaries along Lukens Lane, a road that borders the Reserve on the southwest. We also experience excessive dumping along our southern and eastern boundaries, both of which lie adjacent to roads and housing tracts. We are also required by the Riverside County Fire Department to clear away vegetation where our boundary passes near homes; this also removes native habitat. The proximity of the MCP to the Motte Reserve offers no buffer zone to offset the edge effect. Even considering its least destructive impact, the volume of traffic along the freeway would certainly increase the amount of trash well above that we are dealing with already.

The Riversidean sage scrub habitat located in the northern half of the Reserve and on the adjacent parcels represents some of the most intact stands of this habitat type found in west-central Riverside County. Its degradation would deal a severe blow to the quality of the habitat and to the Reserve's mission to preserve and protect biological diversity. Once degraded the land offers no teaching or research opportunities. In addition to the impacts created by the freeway, we fear that the presence of the MCP would open up the area to development. This will not become an issue if the land surrounding the MCP in the vicinity of the Motte Rimrock Reserve remains within conservation under the MSHCP.

III. Increased Light Pollution

Another significant impact with the potential to negatively affect flora and fauna well inside the Reserve perimeter fence is artificial lighting. Given the current and proposed population growth in western Riverside County the volume of traffic flowing along the MCP when completed will undoubtedly be heavy and continuous. The artificial illumination created by overhead freeway lights and automobile headlights during nighttime hours will likely have adverse effects on animal behavior and plant physiology for those species located on adjacent habitat within the Reserve boundaries.

Artificial lighting has been shown to have detrimental effects on a broad range of taxa including plants, insects, birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians (Longcore and Rich 2004, Briggs 2006). For example, Perry and Fischer (2006) have linked a decline in the numbers of two nocturnal snakes in southern California, the California glossy snake and the western long-nosed snake, to an increase in light pollution. In areas where light pollution has increased, the snakes' populations have declined significantly. Also declining is the snakes' primary prey

species the Pacific pocket mouse. Perry and Fischer (2006) believe that the increased lighting elevates the risk of predation from other nocturnal hunters such as owls.

The Motte Rimrock Reserve is a core reserve in the SKRHCP and one organism with a high potential to be affected by artificial illumination is the federally endangered SKR. Studies show that kangaroo rats significantly alter their behavior during bright moonlit nights by selectively foraging closer to vegetation and avoiding more open microhabitats (Kotler 1984). As in the situation with the snakes, this change occurs presumably in response to an increased predation risk from crepuscular and nocturnal hunters. Experiments show that owls, a key predator on kangaroo rats, have greater success capturing kangaroo rats that forage in more open habitats (Kotler et al. 1988, 1991, Longland and Price 1991). Indeed, it is common practice among researchers working on kangaroo rats and other small mammals to time their trapping so as not to coincide with a full moon. The long-term effects of this altered behavior on kangaroo rat populations is not yet known, but limiting access to food and increasing the probability of attack from predators can only harm populations. The Western Riverside County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (Dudek & Associates 2003) recognizes light pollution from urbanization as a threat to the SKR.

IV. Increased Fire Risk

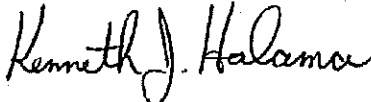
Despite the fact that 2005 was the second wettest year on record, southern California is experiencing severe drought conditions. Climatologists predict droughts may become more severe in the southwestern U.S. as global climate change progresses (IPCC 2007). Extended dry conditions open up grasslands and sage scrub vegetation to the risk of wildfires. The presence of the MCP increases this risk. The vegetation on the Reserve could be wiped out if, for example, a careless motorist tossed a lighted cigarette out their car window into the adjacent brush or grass. The volume of traffic on the MCP also increases the potential that the fires would become more frequent. At its closest point the MCP passes within a few meters of the northern fence; at its furthest point the freeway passes within a few hundred meters. This close proximity of the MCP to the Reserve does not provide sufficient time for fire crews to respond before a fire engulfed vegetation and research projects. Making the Reserve less vulnerable to fire from the freeway would require clearing a swath of Riversidean sage scrub vegetation along the northern fence line within the boundaries of the Reserve, further reducing the acreage of native habitat. A large section of the Reserve would become a buffer zone to protect the areas further south.

Another factor potentially affecting fire risk on the Motte Rimrock Reserve are nitrogen emissions in car exhaust. Dr. Edith Allen and colleagues have shown that nitrogen compounds from auto exhaust settle on soils and act as fertilizers that stimulate the growth of non-native vegetation (Fenn et al. 2003, Allen et al. 2004). The accumulation of dead plant material over time creates a fuel load that contributes significantly to the wildfire danger potential. The exhaust from automobile traffic associated with the MCP has the potential to boost the fuel load on land adjacent to the right-of-way including the Reserve. An enhanced fuel load coupled with the reduced time for fire crew response increases the probability that the Reserve could experience repeated and damaging fires that could devastate the resident native flora and fauna. Moreover, even in the absence of fire in the short-term, stimulation of non-native vegetation

creates an advantage that enables a number of exotic species to out-compete natives, thus further degrading habitat quality in the Reserve.

We hope that you will give our concerns serious consideration. We would like to meet with you to discuss these matters at greater length and discuss alternatives to eliminate these potential impacts. If you have any questions and would like to schedule a meeting, please contact me at (951) 657-3111 or by e-mail at kjhalama@ucr.edu.

Sincerely,



Kenneth J. Halama, Ph.D.
Director, Motte Rimrock Reserve
University of California Natural Reserve System

cc: Marion Ashley, Riverside County Supervisor, District 5
Nita Bullock, Campus Physical Planner, UCR
Michele Coyle, Campus Counsel, UCR
Kelly Drumm, University Counsel, UC Office of the General Counsel
Mark Durham, Chief, South Coast Section, ACOE
Nassim Elias, Project Manager, CalTrans
Leslie MacNair, Biologist, CDFG
Tom Mullen, Executive Director, RCA
Violet Nakayama, Coordinator, UC NRS
Marie Petry, Senior Environmental Planner, CalTrans
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John Rotenberry, Professor of Biology and Director UCR NRS
Doreen Stadtlander, Biologist, USFWS
Charlotte Strem, Coordinator Environmental Planning, UCOP
Carolyn Syms Luna, Executive Director, RCHCA

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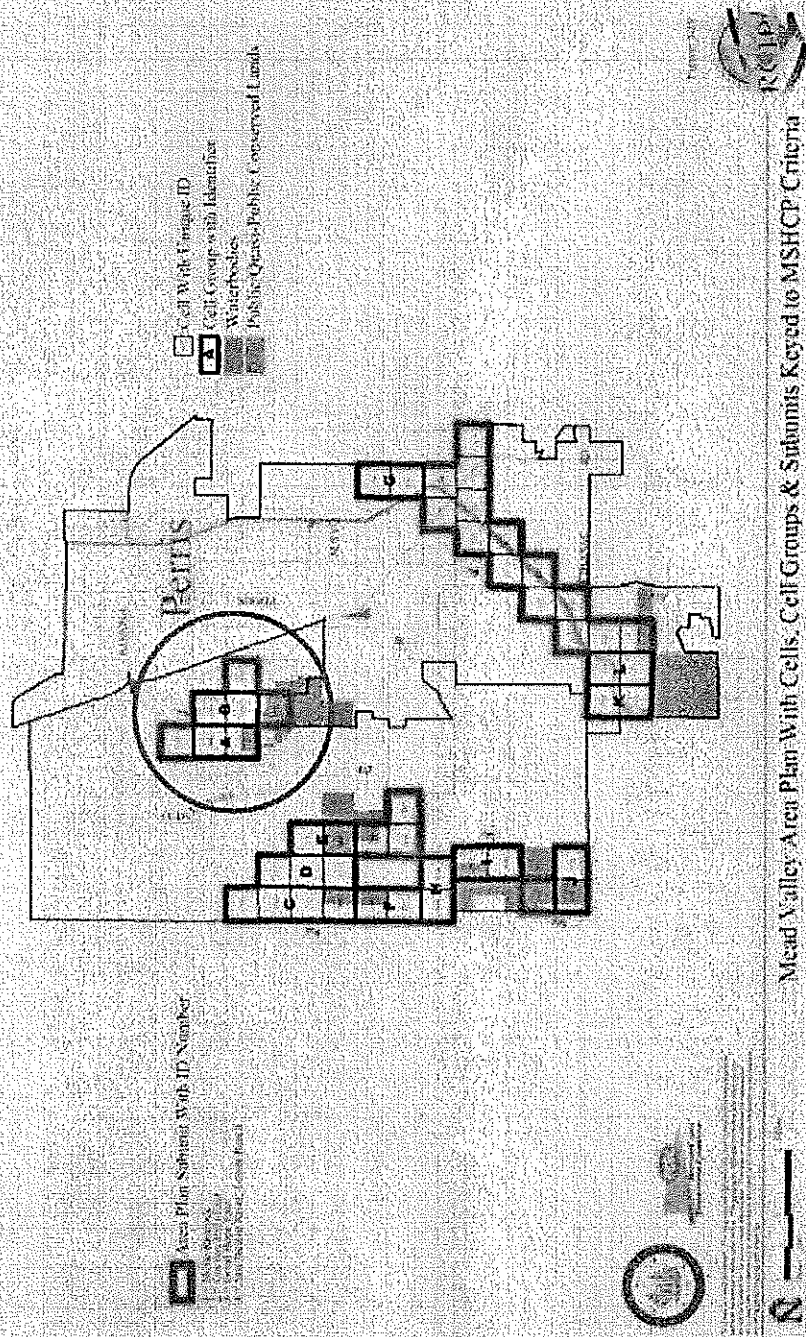


Figure 1. The Mote-Rimrock Subunit (circled) within the Mead Valley Plan Area of the Western Riverside Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan. Figure taken from Dudek & Associates (2003).

Cathy Bechtel
Mid-County Parkway Project Manager
Riverside County Transportation Commission
4080 Lemon Street, 3rd floor
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Re: NOP for the Mid-County Parkway EIR

31 August 2007

Dear Ms. Bechtel:

Thanks you for the opportunity of commenting on the proposed Mid-County Parkway EIR.

The various alternatives of the proposed Mid-County Parkway will detrimentally impact the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (the MSHCP) to varying degrees. It is therefore very important that the EIR considers the impacts of these alternatives on the MSHCP in the context of both their local effect and their effect on the plan as a whole. Any mitigation must take into account that the MSHCP was designed as an integrated plan, and chipping away at one section can upset the whole. For example, impacts to Non-Contiguous Habitat Block 4 (which includes the Motte-Rimrock UC reserve) and to Linkage 3 need to be quantified (with appropriate modeling) in terms of their effects on all covered species across the whole plan. Thus any loss of criteria cells and/or PQP (public/quasi public land) must be modeled in the light of the loss of habitat, the location (shifting habitat from one region of the MSHCP to another is generally detrimental to the whole), and the loss of connectivity. Since the MSHCP was designed as an inter-connected whole, a project such as this has enormous potential for seriously compromising connectivity and creating enhanced habitat fragmentation. It is well established that such fragmentation would increase the extinction risk of the covered species that are affected.

Similarly, the EIR needs to carefully examine the impacts of the project on the Stephen's kangaroo rat (SKR) habitat conservation plan. The project has the potential to have significant negative impacts on this plan since the Lake Mathews Reserve and potentially the Motte Reserve will be affected. As with the MSHCP, the future success of this plan depends in large part on maintaining the environmental quality of all the components of the plan. Mitigation of impacts to the Lake Mathews Reserve and the Motte Reserve in other parts of the species range would undermine this important principle of the conservation plan and would have to be justified with solid scientific modeling.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that I am a Professor of Biology at UC Riverside with expertise in conservation biology, and was a member of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the MSHCP. I have also researched aspects of the conservation of SKR.

Regards,

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